

Dangerous Rabbit punches in Boxing

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Introduction :

What is the rabbit punch? A rabbit punch is a blow to the back of the head or to the base of the skull. It is considered especially dangerous because it can damage the cervical vertebrae and subsequently the spinal cord, which may lead to serious and irreparable spinal cord injury. A rabbit punch can also detach the victim's brain from the brain stem, which can kill instantly [5] [8] [16] [17].

A rabbit punch is a punch aimed at the back of the head or base of the skull. It is known as a rabbit punch as it is used by hunters of rabbits who kill their catch by delivering a blow to the back of the head. In the heat of a moment, a rabbit punch can be delivered by accident should the opponent move their head in such a way that changes the position and therefore target landing of the strike already been thrown. However, any rabbit punches seen as being deliberate will usually cause the referee to intervene (providing a good referee who has spotted the punch!).

The rabbit punch is one of the most dangerous blows in boxing. This term originates from a method used to kill trapped or injured rabbits. Rabbit punching has similar effects on Humans, potentially resulting in unconsciousness, severe injuries and death. Penalties for rabbit punching depend on the offending boxer's intent and whether the blow leads to injury [3].

It is considered especially dangerous because it can damage the cervical vertebrae and subsequently the spinal cord, which may lead to serious and irreparable spinal cord injury. A rabbit punch can also detach the victim's brain from the brain stem, which can kill instantly [9]. A Rabbit Punch is illegal in boxing and combat sports? Also, it is illegal in most striking sports, such as boxing, kickboxing, Muay Thai and MMA, because of the long-lasting damage it can do to an opponent. Punching someone at the back of the head can cause damage to their brain and cause brain bleeds [16].

Figure (1). The rabbit punch



The term was coined in 1915. The punch's name is derived from the use of the technique by hunters to kill rabbits with a quick, sharp strike to the back of the head [4] [10] [16].

This part of the brain is so sensitive that a punch to this area can cause fatal injuries. Back of the head is more sensitive than other parts like face or side of the head. This is the main reason why rabbit punches are dangerous and illegal in fighting sports. A boxer must not punch his opponent's back. Furthermore, rabbit punches and kidney punches are illegal in boxing rules [10]. This type of punch is considered illegal in most combat sports because of its proximity to the spinal cord

and brainstem. The back of the head and neck are areas that house key motor and brain functions, making a rabbit punch particularly dangerous.

Also, rabbit punch is illegal in most fighting sports because it can lead to serious spine and brain injuries. Back of the head is a place where our spinal cord is located, which is an integral part of the human Central Nervous System. Being hit hard can damage the spinal cord and cause paralysis or other spinal injuries. Just a single strike to this area can cause disability. That how sensitive this area is head movement plays a big role in boxing [16]. Boxers move their head up and down, left and right all the time to slip and dodge punches. But by

doing so, they are exposing the back of their head, which they cannot protect the same as the face or side of the head. So even if the opponent is aiming for the face, the punch might land behind the ears on the back of the head. In most cases, this happens during the clinch or other close-range exchanges [16][17] [18].

Combat Sports:

The rabbit punch is illegal in boxing, MMA, and other combat sports that involve striking. The only exceptions are no-holds-barred events, such as the International Vale Tudor Championship (prior to rule changes in mid-2012). On October 17, 2015, Prichard Colón, a well known boxer, was struck on the back of the head multiple times by his opponent, Terrell Williams by using the rabbit punch [2][3] [4] [5] [8] [11].

During the match, Colón experienced dizziness as a result of the illegal punches. After the match ended, Colón began to tremble from his legs and started to vomit. He was rushed to the hospital where he was diagnosed with brain bleeding and underwent surgery.

He was in a coma for 221 days (seven months, 1 week) until he was transferred to his mother's house. As a result of the injuries he sustained, Colón fell into a persistent vegetative state where he no longer could move or talk. As of July 2021, 6 years after the fight, Colón is doing much better, making more progress and is getting treatment for his condition [8] [11].

Are all Rabbit Punches illegal? No, there are cases, notably in boxing, where landing rabbit punches will not get the boxer in trouble. Here is one scenario where rabbit punches are not illegal. Let us say a boxer starts throwing a barrage of punches, trying to knock the opponent out. If at that moment, the opponent turns their back and receives a strike to the back of the head, it would not be a foul. A fighter who is striking is not at fault because he/she is clearly aiming for the face. It is the opponent's fault for turning their back and exposing the back of the head to the barrage of punches [4] [9] [17] [18].

Figure (2) a fault of turning back and exposing the back of the head to the barrage of punches.



Rabbit punches must be strictly forbidden. A rabbit punch is a blow that lands on the back of the head or top of the neck. It is illegal because back of the head is a place where our key meteoric and brain functions are located. A single rabbit punch can cause serious spinal cord and brain injury that could be fatal in some cases. A rabbit punch is a strike that lands right on the back of the head, base of the skull or top of the neck. In this day and age, this type of punches is illegal in just about every fighting sport due to the danger it poses.

[4][9][15][16][17][18].

The reason a rabbit punch is terribly dangerous, is because the lower area of the neck is adjacent to the part of the brain called the medulla oblongata, which is where the spine connects to the brain stem. Punching to this

area is strictly forbidden, because it can lead to paralysis as well as catastrophic brain damage [4][18]. But despite being illegal, rabbit punches are a common thing and you can see them in every boxing or MMA event. In most cases, rabbit punches land without intention and by accident due to the nature of the sport [16][17].

Amateur Sports History:

On June 29, 2014, soccer referee John Sienkiewicz was punched in the neck by Basel Abdul Amir Said, an upset player in an amateur match he was officiating in Livonia, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. Sienkiewicz died two days later of his injuries, and Said was charged with second-degree murder. Sienkiewicz's autopsy showed that the force of the impact on the left side of his neck just below the base of his skull had resulted in a rare injury with twisted and torn arteries around the base of

his skull, knocking him out before he hit the ground. In 2015, Said pled guilty to manslaughter and received a sentence of 8 to 15 years in prison [1] [9] [10] [11].

So why do rabbit punches continue to be a topic of concern in combat sports?

Unfortunately, some fighters still try to use this illegal technique to gain an advantage in the ring. There is no

evidence or report suggesting that a fighter has died due to rabbit punches in a boxing or MMA match. But there were fights, notably in boxing, in which strikes to the back of the head might have contributed to the loss of lives or serious injuries. One such fight was a boxing match between Terrell Williams and Prichard Colon that took place in 2015, [16][17].

Figure (3) Rabbit Punch behind the head.



Physiological effects of rabbit punch:

A rabbit punch is terribly dangerous because the lower area of the neck, which is called the Medulla Oblongata, is where the spine connects to the brainstem. Punching to this area is strictly forbidden because it can lead to paralysis and catastrophic brain damage. More likely is damage to the brain stem from a rabbit punch, which can be irreparable. The brain stem is the link that sends messages from the brain to the body for unconscious functions such as the control and regulation of heartbeat, digestion, and breathing; which if damaged may go offline and become life-threatening. Rabbit punches are also dangerous because they can drive the lower parts of the brain into the foramen occipital magnum and cause traumatic brain injuries. Overall, a rabbit punch is an illegal blow to the back of the head and a very dangerous one [4][16][17].

Referees Responsible:

Referees are responsible for enforcing the rules of the contest and shall not permit fouls or other unfair practices which may cause an injury to a boxer. Referees shall warn each boxer who commits a foul during a boxing contest. Any boxer who commits any foul after being warned by the referee may have points deducted by the referee or may lose the contest by disqualification by the referee [18].

Boxers who commit fouls or any other infraction may be penalized by the referee through the deduction of points from his score. The number of points to be deducted shall be determined by the referee based on his determination of the severity of the foul and its adverse effect on the opponent and shall be reported to the judges and both boxers as soon as practical. The points shall be

deducted from the score of the round in which the fouls were committed [2] [4].

The referee shall stop a contest when he determines that a foul has occurred and determine whether the fouled boxer is able to continue. The referee may order the contest suspended for a reasonable period of time, not to exceed five minutes, to allow the fouled boxer to recover if the referee determines the boxer's chance of winning has not been seriously jeopardized. The referee shall inform the event inspector or his designee of his determination that the foul was accidental [2][18].

The World Boxing Council has released important information regarding 'The Prichard Colon Rule' over rabbit punching dangers WBC chiefs are urging Referees to be more vigilant and more strictly apply the rules concerning rabbit punches, which are putting boxers' lives in grave danger [2] [16].

What happens when boxer gets punched in the head multiple times?

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is a brain condition thought to be linked to repeated head injuries and blows to the head. It slowly gets worse over time and leads to dementia, but the right help and support can manage the symptoms [3].

Early symptoms of chronic traumatic encephalopathy may not be noticeable at first. They may include: mood changes, such as [depression](#) or suicidal thoughts, personality changes, behavior changes, such as aggression and mood swings. As the condition gets worse, boxer will have more noticeable problems with thinking and memory.

Symptoms include: short-term [memory loss](#), confusion, such as getting lost or not knowing what time of day it

is, difficulties with planning and organization, problems with movement. Symptoms usually start gradually, often around 10 years after having repeated head injuries. The symptoms may get worse gradually or stay the same for years before getting worse [3][18].

Prichard Colon Rule:

The Prichard Colon Rule, which the WBC officially sanctions, involves: The initial warning concerning

rabbit punches was given in the referee’s locker room with the instructions before the fight. We recommend that referees be even more specific. They were especially explaining the horrendous injuries this foul could and did inflict. Leave no doubt in the fighter and team’s minds that this will NOT be tolerated [2][13][14].

Figure (4) Three shapes of Rabbit punch- side and under the boxers head.



The referee may immediately stop the action. Warn an offending boxer who punches behind the head. After the warning, any continuous action or retaliation must be immediately addressed by the referee with a firm warning and a point deduction. Referees have the authority to warn, deduct points or disqualify the

offending fighter. We strongly recommend that firm action be taken IMMEDIATELY when a rabbit punch is thrown before the situation deteriorates and a medical crisis occurs. A zero-tolerance to rabbit punching MUST be immediately applied, which means referees have the duty to disqualify the offender instantly [2][18].

Figure (5) illegal Striking Zone.



This decisive action will deter those who have chosen to involve themselves in dirty fight tactics via a ruling insisting and underlining that this WON'T be tolerated. Furthermore, the lives of boxers are at risk. Referees must take strong, prompt, and appropriate disciplinary action [13][17].

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the rabbit punch is a dangerous and illegal punch that is prohibited in boxing and MMA. It is targeted towards the back of the head, neck, or spinal cord, and can cause serious injury or death. Boxers and

MMA fighters should avoid throwing this punch, and referees should monitor the action in the ring to ensure the rules are being followed.

Recommendations:

1. Boxing SA, like the World Boxing Council, must urge referees to be vigilant and strictly apply the rules concerning rabbit punches, which are putting the lives of boxers in grave danger. The reason a rabbit punch is terribly dangerous, is because the lower area of the neck is adjacent to the part of the brain called the medulla oblongata, which is where

the spine connects to the brain stem. Punching to this area is strictly forbidden, because it can lead to paralysis as well as catastrophic brain damage [4].

2. Rabbit punches must be strictly forbidden on all levels of boxing competitions.
3. The WBC is not only urging referees to have a zero-tolerance to rabbit punching. We want to advise trainers to thoroughly discourage it by ordering boxers to immediately and permanently desist and

abandon it. Rabbit punching is not accidental. It is a deliberate foul that often occurs in clinches.

4. It is up to the referees and the fighters themselves to ensure that the sport is played fairly and safely, and to avoid using techniques like the rabbit punch.

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